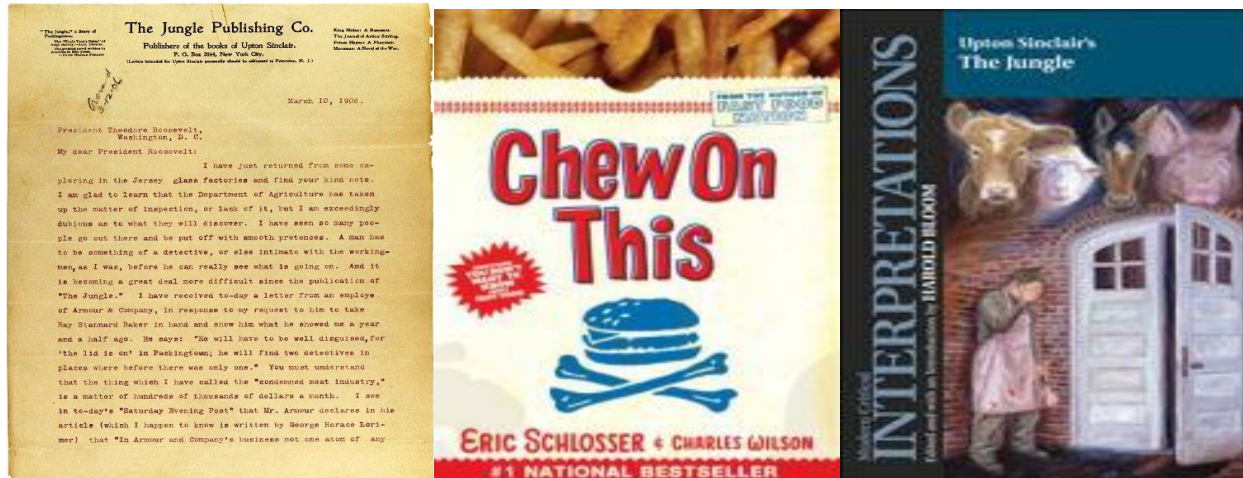


Classic: Letters between Upton Sinclair & President Theodore Roosevelt
inspired by the author's exposé, *The Jungle*

Contemporary: *Chew On This: Everything You Don't Want to Know about Fast Food*
by Eric Schlosser & Charles Wilson



Background on Letters between Upton Sinclair & President Theodore Roosevelt

Over the course of seven weeks in 1904, journalist Upton Sinclair entered Chicago's meatpacking industry and worked undercover as a factory operative. The next year his resultant exposé, *The Jungle*, was serialised in the newspaper *Appeal to Reason*; in February of 1906, it was released in book form and became an instant bestseller. Shortly after its explosive release, and due in no small part to the public's disgusted reaction to the situation, a series of letters were shared between Sinclair and then-U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. Above is the first of Sinclair's, in which he advises Roosevelt on the best way for any federal inspectors to approach the factories: in disguise. Sinclair did eventually meet Roosevelt at the White House, and his muckraking ultimately resulted in the implementation of both the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, and the Pure Food and Drug Act of the same year. [Source: *Letters Of Note*: "The lid is on Packingtown": <http://www.lettersofnote.com/2010/12/lid-is-on-in-packingtown.html>]

~Excerpts from Letters~

"I am glad to learn that the Department of Agriculture has taken up the matter of inspection, or lack of it, but I am exceedingly dubious as to what they will discover. I have seen so many people go out there and be put off with smooth pretences. A man has to be something of a detective, or else intimate with the working-men, as I was, before he can really see what is going on. And it is becoming a great deal more difficult since the publication of *'The Jungle.'*" I have received to-day a letter from an employe of Armour and Company, in response to my request to him to take Ray Stannard Baker in hand and show him what he showed me a year and a half ago. He says: "He will have to be well disguised, for 'the lid is on' in Packingtown; he will find two detectives in places where before there has only one." You must understand that the thing which I have called the "condemned meat industry," is a matter of hundreds of thousands of dollars a month." -- Upton Sinclair, March 10, 1906

At issue – 2 major issues to investigate: "1st, the system of inspection; 2nd, the by-product food industry"

"This is a very long letter, but I feel the importance of the subject excuses it. It would give me great pleasure to come down to Washington to see you at any time, but I would rather it was after you had read *'The Jungle,'* because I have put a good deal of myself into that. / You ask - "Is there anything further, say in the Department of Agriculture, which you would suggest my doing?" I would suggest the following: That you do as Doubleday, Page and Company did; find a man concerning whose intelligence and integrity you are absolutely sure; send him up here, or let me meet him in Washington, and tell him all that I saw, and how I saw it, and give him the names and addresses of the people who will enable him to see it. Then let him go to Packingtown as I did, as a working-man; live with the men, get a job in the yards, and use his eyes and ears; and see if he does not come out at the end of a few weeks feeling, as did the special correspondent of the London *"Lancet,"* whom I met in Chicago, that the conditions in the packing-houses constitute a "menace to the health of the civilized world." [The *Lancet* for Jan 8, 15, 22, 29 - 1905.] – Sinclair

"P.S. I might add that when I was in Chicago I learned a good deal about the connections which the packers have in Washington, so that I think it most likely that before the Department of Agriculture got anybody started for the purpose of investigating Packingtown, word had been sent there to ...the packing-houses that things should be cleaned up. I know positively that this was done in the case of Major Seaman, who went out there for *"Collier's Weekly."*" – Sinclair

~Excerpts from Letters (Continued)~

"My Dear Mr. Sinclair: I have your letter of the 13th instant. I have now read, if not all, yet a good deal of your book, and if you can come down here during the first week in April I shall be particularly glad to see you. / I do not think very much of your ecclesiastical correspondent. A quarter of a century's hard work over what I may call politico-sociological problems has made me distrust men of hysterical temperament. I think the preacher furnishes his measure when he compares you to Tolstoy, Zola, and Gorki, intending thereby to praise you." – Pres. Theodore Roosevelt, 3-15-1906

"In the end of your book, among the various characters who preach socialism, almost all betray the pathetic belief that the individual capacity which is unable to raise itself even in the comparatively simple work of directing the individual how to earn his own livelihood, will, when it becomes the banded incapacity of all the people, succeed in doing admirably a form of government work infinitely more complex, infinitely more difficult than any which the most intelligent and highly developed people has ever yet successfully tried. Personally I think that one of the chief early effects of such attempt to put socialism of the kind there preached into practice, would be the elimination by starvation, and the diseases, moral and physical, attendant upon starvation, of that same portion of the community on whose behalf socialism would be invoked." – Roosevelt

"There are doubtless communities where such self-raising is very hard for the time being; there are unquestionably men who are crippled by accident (as by being old and having large families dependent on them); there are many, many men who lack any intelligence or character and who therefore cannot thus raise themselves. But while I agree with you that energetic, and, as I believe, in the long run radical, action must be taken to do away with the effects of arrogant and selfish greed on the part of the capitalist, yet I am more than ever convinced that the real factor in the elevation of any man or any mass of men must be the development within his or their hearts and heads of the qualities which alone can make either the individual, the class or the nation permanently useful to themselves and to others. / But all this has nothing to do with the fact that the specific evils you point out shall, if their existence be proved, and if I have power, be eradicated." – Roosevelt

~ **Impact** ~ With the instant success of *The Jungle*, Sinclair took his place in the ranks of the "muckrakers," a term that Roosevelt coined in 1906 to refer to a group of journalists who devoted themselves to exposing the ills of industrialization. *The Jungle* raised a public outcry against the unhealthy standards in the meatpacking industry and provoked the passage of The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. No novel since Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published in 1851, had made such a social impact. The novel's success satisfied Sinclair's financial concerns but not his political motivations for writing it. Sinclair had intended the novel to elicit sympathy for the working class and build support for the Socialist movement. His readership, however, was more moved by the threat of tainted beef than the plight of the worker. As Sinclair put it, "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach."

Chew On This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food (adapted from Houghton Mifflin Co.'s website)

Kids love fast food, and the fast-food industry loves kids: it couldn't survive without them. They are the industry's biggest consumers. Journalists Schlosser & Wilson share the fascinating and frightening truth about what lurks behind fast food, addressing the same issues as the groundbreaking *Fast Food Nation*, focusing on aspects of interest to YAs—the nonconformist entrepreneurs who founded the industry; the mistreatment of animals & unsafe conditions in slaughterhouses (a la Sinclair) and of employees in restaurants; the shocking effects that too much fast food can have on growing bodies; and the impact of the industry on schools, communities, and the earth. The book begins with a historical look at the beginnings of the fast-food industry, illustrating how its growth helped change the urban and rural landscape of America, paving the way for the chain stores and malls of today. Young readers will get an intriguing view of business history (origins of fast food, the industry, the entrepreneurs involved, the effects on society, etc.), but stomachs will turn and tempers will flare as the authors shed light on the grisly conditions in a chicken slaughterhouse, explain how market research firms study kids, and learn how those delicious fast-food smells are manufactured at a factory in New Jersey. The book is explicit about why kids need to be informed & profiles real teens whose lives have been affected by fast food (18-year-old boy who decides to have gastric bypass surgery; 12-year-old girl in Alaska who launched a "Stop the Pop" campaign to remove soda machines from her school; teenage boy who helped unionize the McDonald's franchise where he worked — the first to do so — only to see the restaurant close shortly after; & 2 sisters living on a traditional ranch). It addresses some of the most serious issues affecting our society (food advertising targeting kids; 9 million+ overweight/obese children; corps. exploiting workers, underpaying farmers, & manipulating consumers). Educators, parents, & health professionals have an important role in educating and helping young people make healthy decisions about the food they eat.

<p>BABY BLUES by Rick Kirkman and Jerry Scott</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A single fast-food hamburger may contain meat from hundreds, even thousands, of different cattle.• Each can of soda contains more than ten teaspoons of sugar.• A single animal infected with E. coli O157:H7 can contaminate 32,000 pounds of ground beef.• Chickens in slaughterhouses are sometimes killed by being thrown against a wall or stomped on.• Leftover waste from cattle slaughterhouses is sometimes added to chicken feed.• Leftover waste from chicken slaughterhouses is sometimes added to chicken feed, turning the doomed birds into cannibals.
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Selected References / Resources:

- Letters Of Note website: The lid is on Packingtown: <http://www.lettersofnote.com/2010/12/lid-is-on-in-packingtown.html>
- Teaching American History website: Letter to Upton Sinclair from Roosevelt: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/to-upton-sinclair/>
- Upton Sinclair Letter Image Source: National Archives <http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/?dod-date=310>